

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

While I support the intent of this bill, I am concerned that Assembly Bill 1956 may detract attention from critical emergency preparedness activities. AB 1956 is premature since syndromic surveillance systems have yet to be proven effective in the early detection of bioterrorism events or public health emergencies. National, state and local public health experts are currently evaluating these systems to determine if they will be a useful tool in our fight against terrorism. The evaluation under way is part of California's numerous actions, which include development of an effective electronic disease reporting system and expansion of state disease surveillance activities, to strengthen California's emergency preparedness.

I cannot support the redirection of limited Federal bioterrorism funding from effective disease surveillance activities, outbreak investigation and response, laboratory services and other important priorities to implement new, costly, experimental systems.

For these reasons, I am returning AB 1956 without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger